

Message

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Senate passes sweeping budget deal, sending it to Trump

[Jordain Carney / The Hill](#)

The Senate passed a sweeping two-year budget and debt ceiling deal on Thursday, sending the agreement to [President Trump's](#) desk.

Senators voted 67-28 to approve the bill, which suspends the debt ceiling until mid-2021 and adds an estimated \$1.7 trillion to the deficit over the next decade compared to automatic spending cuts that would have otherwise kicked in. The bill was one of the final must-pass items on the Senate's to-do list, paving the way for the chamber to quickly leave for the five-week August recess. The House [already passed](#) the budget deal last week, meaning it now goes to Trump's desk, where he's expected to sign it.

Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) touted the agreement ahead of the vote Thursday, saying "every one of our colleagues should actually vote for it." The deal was negotiated primarily by Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-Calif.) and Treasury Secretary [Steven Mnuchin](#).

"This is the agreement the administration has negotiated. This is the deal the House has passed. This is the deal President Trump is waiting and eager to sign into law. This is the deal that every member of this body should support when we vote," he said.

He got a last-minute boost from Trump, who urged senators to support the agreement shortly before the vote.

"Budget Deal is phenomenal for our Great Military, our Vets, and Jobs, Jobs, Jobs! Two year deal gets us past the Election. Go for it Republicans, there is always plenty of time to CUT!" Trump tweeted.

The agreement includes enough sweeteners that both sides were able to claim victories, including more military spending for Republicans and census and opioid funding important to Democrats.

Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) had been clamoring for the Senate to pass the spending deal as soon as Tuesday, questioning why Republicans were pushing it later into the week.

"It will strengthen our national security and provide our troops with the resources they need to do a very difficult and often dangerous job and it will clear the way for critical investments for those in the middle class," Schumer said on Thursday.

By raising the final two years of spending caps set forth in the 2011 Budget Control Act, the deal effectively ends the threat of severe automatic spending cuts known as sequestration that were intended to force a compromise in debt reduction.

The top-line for defense spending would be \$738 billion and \$740 billion for the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years, respectively. Non-defense spending would be \$632 billion for fiscal 2020 and \$634.5 billion for fiscal 2021.

The figures are significantly different than Trump's fiscal 2020 request, which had top-line defense at \$750 billion and \$567 billion in non-defense. Overall, the deal adds more than \$100 billion in new spending compared to fiscal year 2019 levels, where top-line defense spending was \$716 billion and non-defense was \$620 billion.

But the higher non-defense numbers, plus lack of significant offsets for the increased spending, sparked fierce backlash from conservatives and split the Senate GOP caucus. The deal included \$77 billion in cuts or revenue-raisers to help pay for the agreement.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) got a vote on an amendment that would implement the libertarian-leaning senator's "penny plan" to balance the budget within five years. The amendment needed 60 votes to get added to the budget deal but was rejected in a 23-70 vote.

Heritage Action warned that it would "key" the vote on the deal, meaning supporting it could impact a GOP members ranking with the group, arguing the agreement "would be the most fiscally egregious deal in recent years."

Underscoring the uncertainty about how many Republican senators would back the agreement, both McConnell and Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), his No. 2, refused to say if half of the Senate GOP majority would vote for the deal. Sixteen GOP senators voted against a 2018 budget deal, though significantly more have opposed agreements in previous years.

"Well, we're in the process of working that vote. I'm hopeful and optimistic that when the time comes that we'll have the votes we need to get it done," Thune told reporters when asked if they would have the support of at least half the Republican conference heading into the vote.

GOP John Kennedy (La.) told The Hill that he would oppose the bill because "it continues our deficit spending without much of an effort, if any, to try to save money."

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) also argued that lawmakers should have dealt with the debt ceiling and the budget caps separately. While Mnuchin urged Congress to lift the debt ceiling before the August break, lawmakers had until January to avoid across-the-board cuts under sequestration.

"Potentially given the way they negotiated it, but they say that about everything," Rubio said when asked about the argument from leadership that this was the best possible deal in divided government.

"Ultimately we should have dealt with the debt limit and we should have dealt with the spending caps," he added. "I'm not sure those two are related."

<https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/455534-senate-passes-sweeping-budget-deal-sending-it-to-trump?userid=338193>

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Sinema and McSally's water supply infrastructure bill picks up steam

NICK ESQUER / AZ Big Media

Last month, Arizona senators Martha McSally (R) and Kyrsten Sinema (D) joined forces in a show of bipartisanship by introducing legislation aimed at improving water supply infrastructure, giving local operators of federally-owned facilities the resources and means they need to improve aging water treatment.

The Water Supply Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Utilization Act hones in on giving aid to the Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) facilities that are in need of major upgrades or replacement. The total number of treatment facilities that fall under that category comes in at 80 percent. As those facilities, most of which are more than 50 years old, continue to age, the issue of treating water thoroughly and in a timely manner only increases.

"The program is an important step in ensuring Arizona communities get the most out of their water infrastructure. It allows reservoir operators to store water in flood control space during certain times of the year. The program provides

operational flexibility in a safe and effective way,” Sen. Sinema said. “Arizona communities depend on water infrastructure that is nearly 100 years old. This infrastructure requires maintenance to ensure it will continue to function properly and support our state’s economy. It is critical we ensure our aging infrastructure can provide water to Arizonans for the next 100 years.”

The bill would set aside hundreds of millions of dollars to support water recycling, desalination plants, water storage projects and addresses the southwest region’s potentially dryer future.

“We need to make sure each community has its needs met and we’re investing in water infrastructure and conserving. This needs to meet the unique needs of each community,” Sen. McSally said. “We live in a desert and we’re reliant on many sources of water in Arizona...There’s also other water that comes from groundwater and aquifer. It’s not one-size-fits-all.”

This spring, McSally helped craft the Colorado River drought plan, which was passed in April and approved by President Trump. The seven-state agreement was designed to reduce the use of water from the river by drought-stricken states in the western part of the country. Co-sponsored by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva (D) of Arizona, the bill provides approval to a deal that is designed to manage a limited water supply in the west.

Water continues to be on the minds of Arizona lawmakers heading into Congressional recess. Congress recently heard arguments on the Nogales Wastewater Fairness Act, a bipartisan-led effort that Sinema and McSally were in on as well as Representatives Raul Grijalva (D) and Ann Kirkpatrick (D). The legislation would redirect \$4 million of the International Boundary and Water Commission’s budget to the maintenance and operation of the International Outfall Interceptor, which shuttles wastewater from Nogales, Sonora, through Nogales, Arizona to a treatment plant in Rio Rico.

If the Water Act, which is under review by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, is enacted, it would also ensure funding for key dam safety projects by bolstering the Safety of Dams program by \$550 million and would create the Flood Control Manual and Reservoir Operations Pilot Program, a program aimed at providing more water storage flexibility to the BOR reservoir operators.

“This isn’t just unique to Arizona. There’s water infrastructure that would qualify to other states and it’s impactful to other states across the western United States,” McSally said. “There would be capital investments spread out over many years. We need to make sure the dams we have are safe structurally and improvements are made.”

<https://azbigmedia.com/business/environment/sinema-and-mcsallys-water-supply-infrastructure-bill-picks-up-steam/>
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California farmers are planting solar panels as water supplies dry up

SAMMY ROTH / Los Angeles Times

Jon Reiter banked the four-seat Cessna aircraft hard to the right, angling to get a better look at the solar panels glinting in the afternoon sun far below.

The silvery panels looked like an interloper amid a patchwork landscape of lush almond groves, barren brown dirt and saltbush scrub, framed by the blue-green strip of the California Aqueduct bringing water from the north. Reiter, a renewable energy developer and farmer, built these solar panels and is working to add a lot more to the San Joaquin Valley landscape.

“The next project is going to be 100 megawatts. It’s going to be five times this size,” Reiter said.

Solar energy projects could replace some of the jobs and tax revenues that may be lost as constrained water supplies force California’s agriculture industry to scale back. In the San Joaquin Valley alone, farmers may need to take more than half a million acres out of production to comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, which will ultimately put restrictions on pumping.

Converting farmland to solar farms also could be critical to meeting California’s climate change targets. That’s according to a new report from the Nature Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit.

Working with the consulting firm Energy and Environmental Economics, the conservancy tried to figure out how California could satisfy its appetite for clean energy without destroying ecologically sensitive lands across the American West. The report lays out possible answers to one of the big questions facing renewable energy: Which areas should be dedicated to solar panels and wind turbines, and which areas should be protected for the sake of wildlife, outdoor recreation, farming and grazing?

One takeaway from the report, released this week: California will need hundreds or maybe thousands of square miles of solar power production in the coming decades — and it would make sense to build one-third to one-half of that solar capacity on agricultural lands, mostly within the state.

In part, that's because the Central Valley is more ecologically degraded than California's inland deserts, where bighorn sheep, desert tortoises and golden eagles still roam across vast stretches of largely intact wilderness. The San Joaquin Valley is home to two dozen threatened and endangered species, but the landscape was almost totally reshaped by agriculture long ago.

California has plenty of farmland that could be converted to solar panels without harming the state's \$50-billion agriculture industry, clean energy advocates say. A previous report identified 470,000 acres of "least-conflict" lands in the San Joaquin Valley, where salty soil, poor drainage or otherwise less-than-ideal farming conditions could make solar an attractive alternative for landowners.

At least 13,000 acres of solar farms have already been built in the valley, according to Erica Brand, director of the Nature Conservancy's California energy program and a co-author of the newly released "Power of Place" report.

"It's a region with tremendous opportunity to advance multi-benefit solar projects," Brand said.

Building solar and saving species

For an increasing number of farmers, solar makes economic sense.

At Maricopa Orchards — a major Fresno-based grower of almonds, oranges and other crops — Reiter hatched a plan to build solar panels on thousands of acres of agricultural land in Kern County.

He worked with local officials to create a 6,000-acre habitat conservation plan, which allows solar panels on 4,000 acres of the company's land and sets aside 2,000 additional acres for environmental mitigation. The mitigation lands are now reverting back to habitat for San Joaquin kit foxes, blunt-nosed leopard lizards, burrowing owls and other at-risk species. Reiter's vision is a work in progress: So far, only 160 acres have been developed with solar. The 20-megawatt Maricopa West solar project was built by the German company E.ON and sold to Dominion Energy of Virginia, on land adjacent to almond orchards.

But Reiter, who served as Maricopa Orchards' chief executive until earlier this year and is now a senior adviser to the company, said he's negotiating with three developers looking to build seven more solar projects. Part of the benefit of the habitation conservation plan, Reiter said, is that Maricopa can offer solar companies "shovel-ready" construction sites with permits and mitigation lands ready to go, saving them time and money.

Endangered species also stand to benefit from the habitat plan.

"There's going to be artificial dens, movement corridors and things of that nature. The idea is that it's going to help them survive," Reiter said.

Other Central Valley agricultural powerhouses have their own plans for solar.

Wonderful Co. — which grows tree nuts and owns Pom Wonderful, Fiji Water and Justin Wines — is aiming to power its operations with 100% renewable electricity by 2025. Wonderful opened its first solar project in 2007 and this year signed a contract with Florida-based developer NextEra Energy for a 23-megawatt solar installation, to be built on 157 acres of fallow farmland.

Wonderful sees "tremendous potential for siting solar on agricultural land," said Steven Swartz, the company's vice president of strategy. Wonderful, owned by Beverly Hills billionaires Stewart and Lynda Resnick, can make about as much money producing solar power over a 30-year period, Swartz said, as it can growing almonds and pistachios, two of the most lucrative crops grown in California.

"In one case we're growing an agricultural product that has value, and in another case we're producing electrons that have value," he said.

Swartz added that he expects "relatively limited competition" between solar and agriculture because there's already so much farmland that isn't in production in the Central Valley. Wonderful has 10,000 acres it's keeping fallow, he said, either due to poor soil conditions or insufficient water. In 2015, at the height of California's most recent drought, Central Valley farmers kept about 1 million acres idle all year, NASA scientists estimated.

The biggest solar project being planned in the Central Valley is Westlands Solar Park, where construction of the first 670 megawatts is scheduled to begin in the next few months, according to Daniel Kim, vice president of regulatory and government affairs for the developer, Golden State Clean Energy. The project could eventually grow to 2,700 megawatts of power across 20,000 acres, which is larger than any solar power facility in the world today.

The massive solar project will be built on "drainage-impaired" farmlands served by Westlands Water District, where the soil has become loaded with crop-killing salts — and toxic selenium — because clay layers beneath the dirt prevent irrigation water from percolating down into the underground aquifer.

"If you continue to farm these types of lands, you continue to make the drainage problems worse and worse," Kim said.

Poor drainage and groundwater restrictions aren't the only reasons farmers are looking to solar power. Surface water supplies also have become increasingly unreliable, in part due to environmental regulations that limit how much water can be pumped from the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

How much will it cost to ditch fossil fuels?

The Nature Conservancy's "Power of Place" report doesn't look only at farmland.

The report examines 61 scenarios for achieving California's climate targets. They're based on different assumptions about how much land is protected from development across 11 western states, how many homes add rooftop solar panels, how much lithium-ion battery prices fall, and whether California continues to require that most of its solar and wind power be produced within the state.

One of the report's conclusions is that switching from fossil fuels to clean energy gets more expensive as more land is shielded from development.

For instance, annual electricity costs could be around \$110 billion if most of California's renewable energy is produced in state and only legally protected areas such as national parks and wildlife refuges are off-limits to developers. Statewide electricity costs could rise to \$125 billion if development were prohibited on other lands, such as critical habitat for endangered species and important bird areas.

But if California utilities were allowed to buy more renewable energy from other western states, annual costs would drop to \$113 billion even under the most restrictive land-use rules, the report estimates. Easing land-use rules slightly would bring electricity costs down to \$106 billion — cheaper than trying to build everything in state, even if hardly any lands are off-limits.

"That West-wide scenario is the best-case scenario," said Arne Olson, a senior partner at the consulting firm Energy and Environmental Economics and a co-author of the Nature Conservancy's report.

The "Power of Place" report doesn't capture every force that could shape California's energy future. It assumes no development of offshore wind power, despite enormous potential for turbines off the Pacific coast. It also doesn't account for other states' renewable energy needs, which could be substantial.

Still, clean energy advocates say the document could help California officials balance development with ecosystem protection as they plan for 100% climate-friendly electricity by 2045, the target adopted by lawmakers last year. In 2018, California got 31% of its electricity from renewables including solar and wind, and another 20% from zero-carbon nuclear and large hydropower facilities.

The Nature Conservancy's report "appears to outline thoughtful options for how to site the projects we need to meet the climate crisis," said Shannon Eddy, executive director of the Large-scale Solar Assn., a Sacramento-based trade group.

It's gotten more difficult to build solar in recent years, Eddy said, as conservationists have fought projects in wilderness areas and rural residents have fought projects near their communities. In February, San Bernardino County, California's largest by area, banned the construction of large solar and wind farms on more than 1 million acres of private land.

The price of continuing with business as usual, Eddy said, "is basically losing the battle on climate change."

"We can no longer afford to fight about this. We need all the power we can get as fast as we can get it," she said.

Kim Delfino, California program director for Defenders of Wildlife, is hopeful the Nature Conservancy's findings will help forestall the kinds of ecological conflicts that have slowed clean energy development in the California desert. During the renewable energy "gold rush" of the late 2000s, developers proposed dozens of solar and wind farms in unprotected desert areas, fueling hard-fought battles with conservationists that continue today.

"We're going to have another renewable energy boom. It's inevitable," Delfino said. "This will give us an opportunity, perhaps, to make better choices."

Restoring an altered ecosystem

Wind Wolves Preserve, which is owned by the nonprofit Wildlands Conservancy, offers a unique perspective on those choices.

Spanning 93,000 acres at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, in the heart of the San Emigdio Mountains, the preserve is a refuge for wildlife that once roamed throughout California's heartland, before the region became an agricultural mecca.

Two decades ago, 19 tule elk were reintroduced at the site, part of an effort to restore a population that once numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Today, more than 300 elk call the preserve home.

Wind Wolves has also been planting Bakersfield cactuses, building up what staff say is now the third-largest population of the endangered plant species.

On a recent summer evening, preserve manager Melissa Dabulamanzi drove up a narrow, winding dirt road toward Tule Elk Overlook, which provides a sweeping view of the San Joaquin Valley floor. Sitting in the back seat was Abby Hart, who leads the Nature Conservancy's California agriculture project.

"This kind of shrub-land habitat is largely what the valley should be looking like," Dabulamanzi said

At Tule Elk Overlook, they got out of the car and looked out over the valley, admiring the landscape as the sun disappeared behind distant mountains.

Hart said solar companies, farmers and conservationists will need to work together to build a sustainable future for this region of California.

"There's so little remaining excellent habitat like this," Hart said, referring to the preserve. "If we can get that solar development to happen on already disturbed lands ... that's so much better than having it touch down in areas that are either already protected or are already serving as excellent habitat."

<https://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-agriculture-farmlands-solar-power-20190703-story.html>

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Caltrans breaks new ground on new border route in Otay Mesa

Travis Rice / KGTV

SAN DIEGO (KGTV) – Officials broke ground Wednesday on a new path that will connect multiple freeways on a new route to a new Port of Entry in Otay Mesa.

The Caltrans project aims to link the new state Route 11 and connections to state Routes 125 and 905, with the connection road leading to the new Otay Mesa East Port of Entry.

The East POE project, which will cost approximately \$800 million, is scheduled to be completed by 2021.

Caltrans Trade Corridor Director Mario Orso said, "It's going to be about two years, so we're going to ask the public for patience at Otay Mesa. We're going to have some lane closures, some height limitations, and some noise for major bridges."

The Otay Mesa East Port of Entry will include 27 northbound lanes and eight southbound lanes.

Additionally, Caltrans is installing a real-time border wait time system and a dynamic tolling option to help cut down on delays.

"We did studies in 2008 that showed we were losing a substantial amount of money due to border wait times and that has continued through time as the border volumes keep growing; we are losing a substantial amount of economic opportunity," Orso said.

Caltrans says it is an international improvement project that will benefit both countries on the border.

<https://www.10news.com/news/local-news/caltrans-breaks-new-ground-on-new-border-route-in-otay-mesa>

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CBP holds trade fair in El Paso for businesses using Southern border

Justin Kree / KFOX

EL PASO, Texas (KFOX14) — U.S. Customs and Border Protection held a trade fair Wednesday to meet those who will be using ports of entry for business.

CBP is responsible for thoroughly inspecting everything imported to and exported from the U.S.

The trade fair is a way for agencies at the federal and state level to meet with businesses and have a discussion about what is expected when goods go through the ports of entry.

CBP said the annual meeting is important to keep the Southern border safe for all consumers looking to do business with Mexico.

One of the topics discussed at Wednesday's trade fair was long wait times for semitrucks, which CBP said can be reduced by understanding what is needed when those trucks come to ports of entry.

"Recommendations that they make, recommendations that we make, it's a partnership. It's not a one-way. So, these types of events, as well as the meetings we have with our trade, are very important and it helps us as well," said Ruben Jauregui, chief of field operations for CBP in El Paso.

Each port of entry along the Southern border has its own monthly meeting with stakeholders conducting trade there, but Wednesday's trade fair was a larger-scale meeting and a way to teach those doing business through the ports new protocols or regulations that may impact them.

According to CBP, about 5,000 trucks a day travel through El Paso ports of entry for business.

California may be first to force water suppliers to notify customers of myriad toxic 'forever chemicals'

Janet Wilson / Palm Springs Desert Sun

The clock is ticking. Gov. Gavin Newsom has until Wednesday to decide on a bill that would make California the first state in the nation to require water suppliers who monitor a broad class of toxic "forever chemicals" to notify customers if they're present in drinking water.

"A decision will come tomorrow," a spokesman for Newsom said Tuesday. He declined to say what it would be. The PFAS chemicals, which have been widely used in everything from firefighting foam to Teflon pans, Scotchgard products and even some dental floss, have been linked in some research to cancers, developmental problems and thyroid and liver disease. They're known as "forever chemicals" because they don't break down in the environment or in human bodies.

More than 2.4 million people across Los Angeles, Riverside and Orange Counties may be exposed to the dangerous chemicals, according to estimates by public health advocates using U.S. EPA data.

While New Hampshire and New Jersey require water districts to limit two PFAS chemicals and notify customers, California's law would mandate that consumers receive information about 5,000 of them, if they're detected.

"The industrial legacy of pollution in my district alone is frightening," said Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), author of Assembly Bill 756, which would require the broad notification. "We have federal data that outlines how these toxic chemicals have poisoned our public water supplies, but no such monitoring is mandated or in place in California. That must change."

The bill passed overwhelmingly in both chambers of the California legislature, and now needs to either be signed by the governor, vetoed, or, if he takes no action, it will automatically become law.

Water agencies push for veto

The Association of California Water Agencies has urged Newsom to veto the bill, saying there isn't even technology available yet to test for thousands of the chemicals, and that notifying consumers about substances that are in many cases still being studied could undermine their confidence in public water safety.

"ACWA is not opposed to notifying the public of drinking water contaminants, however, to mandate that water systems notify customers directly regarding chemicals that have not been thoroughly studied would undermine the public's trust in their water providers and set a bad precedent," Adam Quinonez, ACWA's director of state legislative relations, wrote to Newsom.

They also objected to being required to notify each customer via mail, email, internet postings and possible additional public forums. Critics dismissed the latter argument, noting the districts mail monthly water bills to customers, and said public notification was a critical first step to raising awareness of the looming problem and pushing for mandatory limits and clean-ups.

Military sites among the most contaminated

Federal records already show China Lake's Naval Air Station, recently hit by a major earthquake in the California desert, has among the highest levels of PFAS in the country, with as many as 8 million parts per trillion. While there are no mandatory federal caps, the China Lake measurements are more than 10,000 times the maximum recommended levels of 70 parts per trillion.

Twenty-Nine Palms Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, the city of Adelanto and other communities are among 50 sites, largely in southern California, that have reported the chemicals in water supplies, according to Environmental Working Group (EWG).

"Along with climate change, the contamination of drinking water supply with these chemicals are going to be the two greatest environmental challenges California faces this century," said Jane Williams, executive director of California Communities Against Toxics in Rosamond.

Law would strengthen other new regulations

The state legislation comes on the heels of mapping of Dept. of Defense records by EWG and Northeastern University showing more than 700 sites across the USA, including 400-plus military bases, have high levels of perfluoralkyls and polyfluoroalkyls, or PFA and PFOA's, widely used in firefighting foam, by chrome platers and in product manufacturing.

The bill is also a companion to new requirements rolled out by the State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Drinking Water last year. Recommended limits were lowered for the chemicals, and three phases of testing will be required:

Phase 1: 31 airports, including LAX and possibly Palm Springs International Airport, plus 573 drinking water wells within a two-mile radius of military bases and other known contaminated sites

Phase 2: refineries, terminals, non-airport fire training sites, urban wildfire areas

Phase 3: wastewater treatment plants, domestic wells

But while the data must be given to given to authorities, the current regulation only recommends that consumers be notified.

Williams said even though levels higher than the recommended federal 70 parts per trillion had already been found in numerous locations, including eastern Los Angeles, Anaheim, Sacramento, Corona, Orange and elsewhere, "customers never received notification."

The new law changes that.

The PFAS class of chemicals, created and marketed since the 1940's by DuPont, 3M and now Chemours, have been widely used in industrial and consumer products, including nonstick pans, rain gear and even some brands of dental floss. They persist for years in the environment, and can form new, dangerous compounds when they interact with water, researchers say. They accumulate in humans and animals exposed to them.

"The pyramids are going to be gone and these chemicals are still going to be here, that's how persistent they are," said Williams.

"Forever chemicals" known risks

The two most studied types of PFAS are known by the acronyms PFOA and PFOS. Human health effects associated with exposure to PFOA include kidney and testicular cancer, thyroid disease, liver damage, and preeclampsia; exposure to PFOS is associated with immune system effects, changes in liver enzymes and thyroid hormones and other conditions. PFAS are now estimated to be detectable in the bloodstream of approximately 99% of the U.S. population. Michigan currently has the highest number of reported PFAS sites, but with additional testing already underway in California airports and industrial sites, experts expect California could take the lead.

States taking action

States are increasingly passing various laws to address parts of PFAS contamination, such as in food packaging. There are no national mandatory caps on the substances, only recommended levels.

Several states are suing manufacturers for hiding known contamination risks.

Newly installed U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper announced last week that he is creating a PFAS task force to study the problem, and an array of environmental and consumer groups are pushing Congress and the US Environmental Protection Agency to address the growing problem.

Twenty-two state Attorneys General, including California's Xavier Becerra, this week called on congressional leaders to adopt PFAS monitoring and cleanup legislation.

"Drinking water should never come out of tap contaminated with non-stick chemicals, and it is heartening that states are taking action while the federal government drags its feet," said David Andrews, a senior scientist at EWG. "The only way to know if PFAS contaminates water is to test it, and consumers should be notified."

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/environment/2019/07/30/california-may-first-compel-water-suppliers-notify-customers-pfas-forever-chemicals/1863578001/>

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Gov. Lujan Grisham's new stream commission may change how New Mexico handles water issues
Theresa Davis / Albuquerque Journal

ALBUQUERQUE - Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's recent move to replace seven Interstate Stream Commission members could change how water issues are handled in New Mexico.

ISC director Rolf Schmidt-Petersen, whom the governor appointed in June, said he was excited about the new group.

"They all bring a tremendous amount of experience," Schmidt-Petersen said of the appointees, adding that each person has in-depth knowledge about state, federal and tribal water issues.

The new ISC director said the commission's focus is interstate water compacts and water planning in New Mexico.

"We also do river maintenance, levee projects and acequia projects, and endangered species restoration," he said.

In Lujan Grisham's October 2018 water plan, which was released during the gubernatorial campaign, she said the ISC was essential to water issues in the state but needed revitalization.

"Dysfunction, political infighting, a staffing exodus and budget cuts have all undermined the mission of the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) and the Office of the State Engineer (OSE)," the water plan says.

In the July 19 announcement about the new appointees, Lujan Grisham said the new members' "diverse knowledge and expertise will serve New Mexicans well." Schmidt-Petersen said the new ISC will contribute to the governor's 50-year water plan.

Since 2014, the ISC has approved money for the New Mexico Central Arizona Project Entity and the Bureau of Reclamation to plan for a Gila River diversion. Lujan Grisham campaigned on a promise to terminate the diversion project.

The old commission was scheduled to visit proposed diversion sites in southwest New Mexico in August, but the ISC director said the Gila trip is on hold while the new commission members settle in.

"We need to do orientation in an office setting, but getting out into the field is a really good thing for our projects," Schmidt-Petersen said. "I want these members to see different parts of the state and meet the water users there."

The governor reappointed Mark Sanchez as ISC chairman. State law requires the ninth commission member to be the state engineer, currently John D'Antonio. The new members — listed below with some information provided by the Governor's Office — will serve six-year terms.

Aron Balok is the superintendent of the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District in Roswell. Balok was the southeastern regional director of the state Farm and Livestock Bureau and is a member of the Groundwater Management Districts Association and the National Water Resource Association.

Bidtah Becker is the former executive director and assistant attorney general of the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources. She is a trustee at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

Greg Carrasco is a farmer and rancher in Las Cruces who has served with the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, New Mexico State University Foundation and the Diocese of Las Cruces Foundation.

Paula Garcia is the executive director of the New Mexico Acequia Association and the former president of the New Mexico Association of Counties.

Mike Hamman is the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District's chief engineer and CEO. Hamman has also been the area manager for the Bureau of Reclamation, an ISC regional water planner, Santa Fe water utility director and the Jicarilla Apache Nation water administrator.

Stacy Timmons is a hydrogeologist and program manager at New Mexico Tech's Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. She manages the Aquifer Mapping Program research group, which addresses groundwater data gaps in New Mexico.

Tanya Trujillo is the lower basin project director for the Colorado River Sustainability Campaign. She was executive director of the Colorado River Board of California, worked with the Interior Department and served as general counsel to the ISC.

<https://www.scsun-news.com/story/news/local/2019/07/29/new-mexico-interstate-stream-commission-key-governor-lujan-grisham-water-plans/1859320001/>

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